

7
Stage Policy detected ; or some select Pieces of Theatrical secret History laid open :

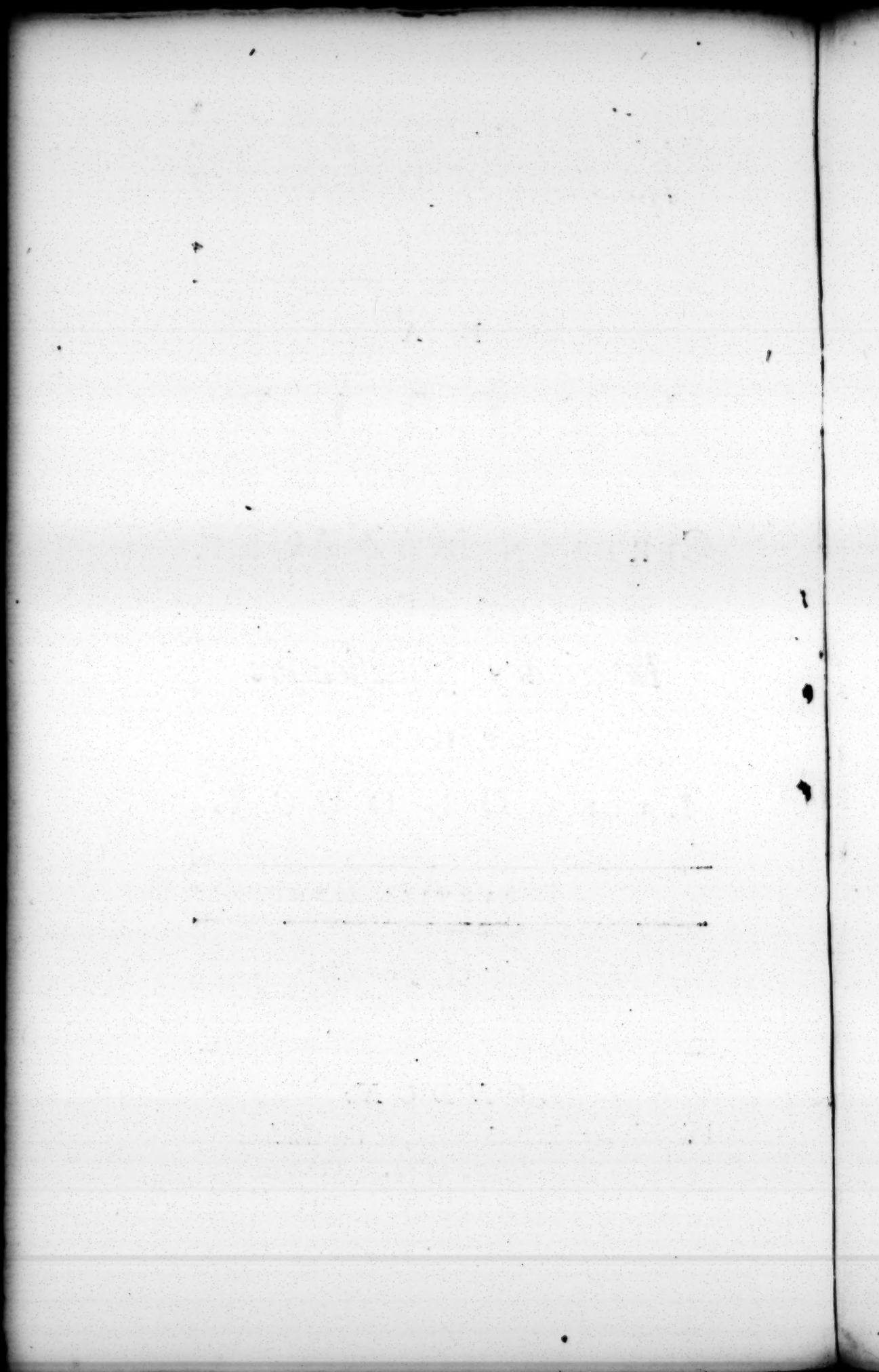
I N A
L E T T E R
T O A
C E R T A I N M A N A G E R
O N H I S
Imaginary Justification
O F H I S
L A T E C O N D U C T.

By an IMPARTIAL HAND.

— *Nec lex est justior ulla
Quam necis Artifices arte perire sua.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBINSON, at the *Golden Lyon*
in *Ludgate-Street*, 1744. Price 1 s.



LETTER, &c.

S I R,

THE late extraordinary Disturbances, as you are pleas'd to call them, at *Drury-Lane* Theatre, being become a very common Subject of Discourse in Town, and your Address to the Public on that Occasion appearing no way satisfactory; I take the Liberty, as a wholly disinterested Person, to give both you and the Public my Thoughts on it freely and openly in this Manner.

Where the Public (as in this Case I presume they must) are to be the only Judges,

B

I

I hope, even you will allow, they ought first to be made acquainted with the Matter of Complaint: The late Audiences, who made you so sensible of their Resentment, I make no question were so, and well knew they had too much Provocation for every thing they did; but as you cunningly seem in your Address to apply rather to such Part of the Public as were not of those Audiences (for as I understand that Piece, it seems rather an open Affront to them, and an Appeal to others against their Injustice to you, than a cool Reasoning with them;) you must not take it ill, if to lay a clear State of the Case before those whom you expect and wish to be your Judges, I am now and then oblig'd to say some Things which you had rather should not be spoken.

But first in Justice to those Audiences whom you aim to accuse to the Town of Cruelty and Injustice to you, you must
give

give me leave to observe that there is not in all probability one of them but who would much rather have sat still to see a Play perform'd, as they have a Right to expect to see it, and as it was in your Power to have it perform'd, than to have disturb'd themselves and others by their Resentment: But when the Abuses they have Reason to complain of are brought to the Height they are at present, and seem to threaten, if that be possible, to be carried farther still; What are they to do but to exert themselves in their own Cause, and honestly and fairly demand to have all they pay for, and to pay for no more than they desire to have? And this I take to be in a few Words the Sum of their Demands; which however you are pleas'd to understand them, you must give me leave to inform you, are not limited to the Prices of Pantomimes, as you would perswade the World to believe, but extend themselves thus far to the whole Business of the Stage,

that they expect to see Plays perform'd as they used to be, in the best Manner a Manager has it in his Power to have that done: Instead of which, you have so notoriously been actuated by your own ill-founded Schemes of Interest, instead of the Desire of pleasing them, that they found it brought to this Alternative, either to find some Means of bringing you to a better Discharge of the Duty of a Manager, or wholly to absent themselves from your House. And tho' the Means they have used may have a little discompos'd you for the present, I think, on cool Reflection, you cannot rank them among your Enemies for chusing rather to *amend* than to *forsake* you.

This I take to be, in general Terms, the State of the present Dispute; and before I enter on the Particulars of the Complaint, probably both yourself and the Town will expect I should take some more particular

particular Notice of your Address : I shall do you the Justice therefore to examine what Reason there is in every Sentence of that Justification of your Conduct, before I enter on the many Particulars of the Town's Subject of Complaint against you, and perhaps make the several Paragraphs of your own Address introductory to them.

You begin, Sir, with observing, that *the extraordinary Disturbances which have lately happened at your Theatre, greatly affect the Diversion of the Public* ; but give me leave to observe to you, that the Authors of this Disturbance were not, as you would insinuate, a Set of busy People, who rudely broke in upon, and interrupted the Diversions of the Public, but your whole Audience, at least, what ought to be look'd on as your whole Audience, all who paid for their Places, and consequently all who had a Right to speak
their

their Thoughts : They were indeed that Publick whom you pretend they were disturbing, and had an indisputable Right, if they rather chose it, to tell you their Thoughts, and repeat them, till they, if possible, made you sensible of your Errors ; instead of seeing what they had Sense enough to disdain to see.

If therefore you would make your Peace, if you know and would consult your own Interest, let this be your first Recantation : No longer look on those Audiences as particular Parties, or idly imagine the Town in general of another Opinion, acknowledge their Resentment the *Vox Populi*, perswade yourself that every Audience will be of the same Opinion they were, and instead of expostulating against them, reason with them.

The Publick expected your Address, and this they expected in it : They thought

to see your Reasons for your Conduct, but thought you might have given it a more modest Face, than boldly to set out with telling them you intended to justify it. I know not who it is that has advised you to this wrongheaded Scheme of flying in the Face of those on whom you depend for your Support, and exasperating those, whom alone it is your Interest to study to oblige : But certain I am, that had that Address been calculated, instead of defying your imaginary Enemies, to the making them your Friends, you would as long have felt the Benefit of it, as you now may the Vexation. Surely neither you nor your Advisers considered who they were that had expressed their Resentment against you, when you so idly attempted in that Paper to play with Words and to pass 'em upon them for Arguments.

You

You propose to justify your Conduct, you say, by giving a *fair and candid State of the Case* ; a Thing, 'tis evident by the Sequel, you never intended : And this you flatter yourself will convince the Impartial. Sir, let me tell you, you pay a very ill Compliment in this to your Audience, as well as a very unjust one : I do not believe there was one partial Person there, except the miserable Set of Wretches whom you had brib'd to support you in all your Designs, and insolently sent in among People who had paid for their Diversion, but were *asham'd*, or from their Appearance, very prudently *afraid* to sit near them : These then are your impartial Auditors ; these the Publick whom you labour to convince, and of whom indeed your Arguments are worthy. And what are these equitable Persons to be convinc'd of ? Why, that the *fomenting such Divisions is contrary to your*
In-

Inclinations : We do not doubt it, Sir, Let you go on and treat us as you please, and the Devil must be in you sure enough, if you quarrel with us about it : But it would be a good first Principle, in People who are so very cautious of fomenting these Divisions, to be as careful not to give Occasion for them, as hardy in justifying them.

The Reasons of Complaint assigned, you tell us, are, as you apprehend, the Exhibition of Pantomimes; and advanced Prices. The Insults on the Audience I do not name among them, because they did not happen till after the Complaint, and therefore cannot be reckoned by any Body but yourself amongst the Causes of it: The Pantomimes then, and advanced Prices, you are pleased to say, you apprehend are the Causes of the Town's Complaint against you : This, as it appears a Thing of not Consequence enough to justify the Re-

C

sentment

sentment against you, you imagine, must
 blacken the Character of the Disturbers,
 in the Opinion of those who know no-
 thing of the Story but from your own
 Account of it. I shall, after again inform-
 ing-you, that it had been better for you, to
 have taken Shame upon yourself, as you de-
 serv'd it, than to have exasperated them, by
 adding to their Causes of Resentment, observe
 to you, that I know nothing more base and
 mean, nothing that can render a Man
 more justly despicable in the Eyes of all
 Men of Sense and Spirit, than the writing
 what one's self knows to be false: You
 perfectly know these were not the Reasons
 of the Town's Resentment, any farther
 than that as they were highly displeased
 with your Conduct in general, they had
 been provoked into uttering their Aversion
 to your Management in all Particulars, by
 this additional Stroke of Tyranny. You
 know you have been publickly complain'd
 of, for compelling your Performers of most
 Con-

Consequence to play on separate Nights, and never giving an Audience any one Play in the greatest Degree of Perfection you could, which, whatever may be your particular Thoughts, you will find the Publick will hereafter believe they have a Right to demand of you, and I hope will have Publick-Spiritedness enough to assert it.

Perhaps they are generous enough too to be concern'd for the Misfortunes of a Set of People whom they remember to have given them great Pleasure heretofore, and whom they look upon at present as a Number of innocent Persons, distress'd unjustly by your Tyranny, and whose Redress lies only in their Hands: Add to this, their just Resentment at seeing their Places so ill supply'd by those you employ in their stead; and perhaps it will appear no Improbability to you, that the Resentment you have kindled in your Audiences may rise so high, partly from a

kind of Right they may be supposed to have to the best Representations of Plays you can procure them, and partly from an honest and generous Pity for the unjustly Oppress'd, as to demand the absolute replacing of them all : But more of this hereafter.

To continue the Examination of your Address: The next Thing you advance is, That *Pantomimes* ought to be suffer'd, because *tho' they are distasteful to the Delicacy of some Judgments, yet they are more happily suited to others.* Precious Judgments must those be indeed to which the *Pantomimes* exhibited at your House can be suited ! But what is this in plainer Terms but saying, Tho' you, Gentlemen of the Pit and Boxes, of whom I receive a Hundred Pounds, more or less, a Night, are displeased at these Things, yet there are a Number of People every Night, who, on the latter Account, pay me their Sixpences apiece in the Upper-Gal-

Gallery who like them, and expect them,
 and to be sure I shall not be so much
 my own Enemy as to refuse their Money,
 especially when I consider the additional
 Sixpences and Shillings I can by that
 very Means demand of you. This is the
 plain Meaning of that Sentence, and yet
 I must go farther in regard to it, and
 add to the Baseness and Injustice of it,
 that I do not believe it to be Truth. I
 have a better Opinion of every Part of an
English Audience, than to believe the very
 meanest of them could be so pleas'd; and
 dare affirm, that if your own Affairs would
 suffer you to mix yourself among the
 several Parts of an Audience, at the Time
 of one of those Representations, you would
 find as much Disatisfaction in the Upper
 Gallery, as in the Pit; a general Murmur
 often rising to a Hiss, but that it is over-
 awed and over-nois'd by the venal Hands
 who have their Places at a Play-House,
 as Bribes for applauding whatever is done
 there,

there, and no such Thing as Applause, but from such, and those so terrible to look at, that a Man's Care of his own Safety, would awe him from expressing his different Sentiments before them. I cannot think another Age will believe that ever such a Thought as this could enter into the Head of a Manager, as a Way of supporting his House against his Audience: The Scheme indeed is, I think, a little ill founded; but supposing the Thing any way practicable, I cannot think a shorter or more certain Way could ever be found to it than yours; the demanding great Prices for Things they must despise, and defying their Attempts to put them down, by bringing it to this Alternative, that a Man must see by the furious Face and heavy Club of an ill-looking Fellow who sits next him, that he must either be pleas'd, or be knock'd down. Is it to be wonder'd at if an Audience under these Provocations, and with the

the Hearts of a free People in their Breasts, resolve to overbear this tyrannical Scheme, and assert their Right of being pleased, where they pay for their Pleasure? Or is it strange, that if, when they have in some degree got Power into their Hands, one Act of Oppression should put them in mind of more, and they should demand a Redress for all: You cannot suppose but that the Cause of your excluded Actors lies deep in the Heart of many of their Friends, who tho' they may have particular Reasons for not in express Words demanding their being received at present, yet may hold it determin'd in secret, that you shall never know a Moment's Peace till they are: To this join the general Wishes of an Audience, and Desire of every Body to see 'em where they used to shine, and think yourself what may, what *must* be the Consequence.

You say farther, That the *Receipts of*
the

the House are a Proof of the good Reception of your Pantomimes, it being notorious, that they are necessary to be added to the best Play to procure a numerous Audience. All that I can say to this, is, that it is an absolute Falſity: That I appeal to all who have been uſed to frequent the Theatre, and of all others, nay appeal moſt ſtrongly to yourſelf, Whether many Houſes, where there has been only a bare Play acted with the greateſt Strength you could give it, have not been full; when as many, with the Plays as you choſe to have them acted with your *Pantomimes*, have not been miſerably bare? When have you had ſuch full Houſes, as on many of the Nights, for Inſtance, when the *Rebearſal* and *Macbeth* were acted ſingle? And when ſuch miſerable thin ones, as at the Beginning of the preſent Season with your *Pantomimes*? Nay, let me ſet the Truth of this Aſſertion in a clearer Light, by appealing both to the Publick, and to
you

you for your Judgment; which would be most likely to gain you a full House To-morrow, the *Fair Penitent*, for Instance, with Mrs. *Cibber*, Mr. *Garrick*, and Mr. *Sheridan*, as the Town thinks they have a Right to see them all there together; this Play alone, I say, or the *Alchymist*, as you have it now perform'd, with one of your *Pantomimes*? Who is there but wou'd crowd to see the one, and who, I had almost said, wou'd even be hired to sit out the other? Here then, Sir, lies a plain and open Method for you to get good Houses and good Credit, to receive at once People's Money and their Thanks: And why you should not do this, or what fair Reason either you, or any one beside, can have for not doing it, is to me an absolute Mystery; but in all Probability, as Matters go at present, you will be forc'd for once to act according to your own Interest, tho' not in your own Way,

D and

and shew us all your shining People together, in which Method every one can perceive that each of them will shine with great additional Lustre.

The next thing you advance in your Address, (as I propose doing you the Justice of not omitting the Consideration of a single Line of it) is that *you are to be justified in demanding advanc'd Prices by the great Increase of the Charges of the Theatre, which notwithstanding any Reduction that has been made, are still, at least, a fourth greater than usual.* This Assertion has, beyond all the rest of your Address, astonish'd and exasperated the Town, they cry out upon it as a notorious Falshood, and know not whether they should most wonder at, The Assurance or the Folly of affirming it to them. They cannot be brought to believe, that at a Time when excepting two or three Persons the Stage was so ill supply'd with Performers, when
there

there is no additional Expence of Dancers, &c. the House can be at a greater Expence than when there were a good Set of Performers well paid, and so great a Sum paid to the *Fausans*, &c. as they so lately remember, and wonder at the barefac'd Simplicity of affirming it. Here indeed I must a little vary from the general Cry against you, and acknowledge, that all Things consider'd, I do, in some Sort, believe the Truth of your Assertion. If indeed we will allow nothing to be the immediate Expences of the Theatre, or Charges of the House, but what is employ'd in procuring Performers, Dancers, Decorations, &c. for it; in short, nothing but what is spent in adding to what we see upon the Stage, I must allow, that I believe the Charges of the Theatre, instead of being more than a fourth Part greater, are, nay they must be, greatly less than usual: But if we consider the Account in all its Branches, and think of the

Expences a Manager may possibly be at, and which he alone is the Judge of, in the Maintenance of the Retinue of his Hall and Lobby; the Support of thread-bare Poets, Bullies and hungry Lawyers; and add to this the Multitudes of Nothings, as to Price, that fill up perhaps half the Places in the Theatre every Night, and sometimes keep out so many People who would have paid their Money; perhaps what has been told us is a sort of Truth. Thus far at least it may be so that the Charges in Proportion to the Receipts of the House are a fourth larger than they have us'd to be; and this, as I before observed, you are alone the Judge of: When we see People to the Amount of a hundred Pound in the House, who but yourself knows whether the half of them (as I believe that is generally the Case) are not written Orders, and the Receipt of that hundred Pound is so at once reduc'd to fifty? Who can judge also how much
Mo-

Money may have been lost in future Nights, by the Appearance of the People sent in by these Orders, many that had paid not chusing to go another Night because they sat next a Fellow, whom, by his Appearance, they might very well guess for a Pick-pocket? Who, but the Person employing such Ministers of Vengeance, can say, how much each Bruiser, as they are call'd, shall demand for his Evening's Work; who is employed (if such Things are done) to knock down any one who presumes not to be pleas'd with what is provided for their Entertainment? Indeed in my Opinion a Fellow, who in this Manner defies both Law and Danger, and runs the double Hazard of a Sword and a Halter, may reasonably demand a handsome Price for doing it; and a Number of these Stipends every Night, may cut deeper than an Audience can well imagine into the Profits of a House, that is but about half as good as it appears to be; and I make it no Question

tion but, all Things considered, a House thus conducted may be more expensive as well as less advantageous to a Manager, than one where the Performers were the only People to be paid; and the Audiences pay, and are not paid for their Applause.

As to your now submitting to return the advanced Price to those who chuse to go out before your *Pantomimes* begin, do not imagine, Sir, that you can be allowed to make a Merit of that: It was but by absolute Compulsion that you submitted to it, and is to be looked on as their Victory, not your Compliance: You stood it out much longer than you ought to have done in Prudence, where the Demand was so perfectly just: And all you can be a Gainer by this affected Resignation to a Thing you could no longer oppose, is, the dear-bought Remembrance, that there was a Time when so light a
 Con.

Concession would have gained that Pardon, which now the Glory of your stubborn Heart must pay much dearer for.

The next Article in your Address demands, I think, a more unshaken Reverence to the Veracity of all you are pleased to affirm, than any Thing that has preceded it : You are there pleased to bid us forget all that you have done, and believe a great deal that you have not done, in Complaisance to your absolutely affirming, That as to the *Insults on the Audience*, (those you mean, I presume, which were subsequent to the Disturbances; for what others I have before mentioned, you don't seem to take any Notice of) *that you should be the last to commit such an Offence, and the first to make Atonement for it.* I would only ask you, in regard to this modest Assertion, who it is that has committed these Offences but yourself? And, what is the
Atone-

Atonement you have been so ready to make for 'em? There are too many People, I believe, Sir, deeply sensible of the Offence: And the Audience have had Spirit enough to demand that Atonement you say you are so ready to make; but such is the Distance of your Mouth from your Heart, that tho' you have thus publicly declared yourself ready to make this Atonement, you have suffered them to demand it Night by Night in vain, though to your own prodigious Loss as well as Damage.

This notable Declaration of your Humility, you second with another, just as likely to be believed as the former, of your Innocence; and very prudently advise the Publick not to expect you to be answerable for an Offence you are innocent of, viz. a certain Gentleman's being seized, and carried before a Magistrate; which whole Proceeding, you assure us, you was
an

an entire Stranger to. We have but your bare Word for this Innocence of yours, Sir, and that in direct Contradiction to our own Opinion, and to common Sense ; and how little Weight your bare Affirmation of a Thing ought to have with us, is very evident from the other Parts of your Address. How can we suppose that any Person in your House, would, or dar'd seize upon a Gentleman, who made one of an Audience, who had paid for the Place they sat in, on his own Opinion and Authority, without your particular Commands ? Nay, if I mistake not, that was the Fellow's very Excuse for doing it, however he might be taught to alter his Story afterwards. All Thinking People, I believe, Sir, judge it, even in your self, a very rash and inconsiderate Action, as you cannot but suppose it must exasperate all the rest of the Audience into a Resolution of bringing you by any Means to do Justice, and beg Pardon where you

E

had

had committed so monstrous an Offence, and can we be ever made to believe, that any other Person dared to do this, or, that after it was done, you could be so disinterestedly easy, as not to give yourself the Trouble of even enquiring who it was that did it, as you would have us believe by your Address, where you positively affirm, that you now do not know by whom it was done : But for fear we should never be brought to believe yourself alone in so improbable a Thing as this, you have, by a most memorable Blunder, brought Oath of it, and very prudently caused a Fellow, whose Stretch of Conscience we all profess beyond most that have been met with, to swear to a Negative, and declare on his Oath, in the most express Terms imaginable, that you knew nothing of the Matter. One Man's thus swearing to the Thoughts and secret Knowledge of another, is an admirable Way of evading the Guilt of the Design
of

of a Crime, and may be made very extensively useful ; but all I shall observe on it, is, that, perhaps, the ill-natur'd Part of the World will believe he might have been procur'd, at the same Price, to swear you were in *Greenland*, or at *Constantinople*.

The *Bruisers* that we saw upon the Stage on *Saturday* Night, you, with your wonted Modesty, and strict Regard to Truth, assure us, were Carpenters, Scene-Men, &c. I cannot but highly applaud this Manner of Argument, even more, I think, than any thing else I have seen from you. The perswading a Man out of what he sees, by assuring him he has no Eyes, is a new Sort of Logic indeed ; and, I think, to your immortal Honour, if you triumph here, and make it good, the most unanswerable of all the Arguments I ever heard. But I cannot omit that some of your Audience are impatient to know whether Mr. *Broughton*

and *Smallwood* in particular, who fac'd the Audience with that barefac'd Intrepidity, that makes so remarkable a Part of their Character, are inlisted under you as Scene-Men, Carpenters, or Peace-Officers; indeed if there be Truth in what is so commonly reported, they may very well be term'd a Sort of Peace-Officers in your Service, and indeed the best in the World, for knocking a Man down is certainly a way of making him keep Peace with a Vengeance.

You add, that these People did not appear, till urg'd by the Violence of the Tumult. I am afraid, Sir, there is more Truth on the contrary side of the Question, and that the greatest Violence of the Tumult was occasion'd by the insolent sending on of these People; and not the Occasion of it.

Your

Your Salvo for the Multitude of these Bullies that appeared in the Pit, where you could not have the Hardiness to tell us they were Scene-Men or Peace-Officers, when so many People talked with them, and some had more *feeling* Proofs of who and what they were, is admirable; *they must have come in with the Multitude when the Door-keepers were driven from their Posts*, being before, like the Fryar and the Colonel to the Relief of Gomez's Wife, all passing by Accident that Way. Methinks I cannot but congratulate the happy Fortune of these People, that they should accidentally be all got together about the Doors of the Play-House, just at the lucky Moment when they were wanted to the Assistance of their old Patron and Benefactor. Surely you think, Sir, you are talking to Children, or you could not put so gross an Affront on the Understandings of the People you have made your Enemies,

mies, and seem, by your Conduct, resolved to continue such.

These, Sir, are the Things which you modestly tell us *you could not apprehend would ever be construed as an Infringement of the Liberties of an Audience*: And this Address, every Sentence of which I have so fairly examined and enquir'd into the Truth and Justice of, what you are pleas'd to call an *impartial Account of your Conduct*, and on the Strength of which you are hardy enough to appeal to the Public for their Judgment against the Audience of *Monday Night*. You saw, Sir, by your next Attempt to play, what was that Judgment, and how that Publick, to whom you have appealed, judge of you: For my own Part, I think they cannot do you greater Justice, than to judge of every Action of your Life by your Address, and make the strict Regard you have paid to
Truth

Truth in that, the Measure of their Belief in all they shall hear hereafter from you.

But be that as it may, thus much I presume you may have learn'd from what you have suffered already for your imaginary Offence, as you are pleas'd to term it, that there is a Duty from the Manager of a Play-House to the Publick, on whom he entirely depends for his Support; and that if ever he irritates that Publick to a Censure of his Conduct, and an exerting of that Right, they will assert over him; he has nothing left for it but an immediate Compliance with their Demands, if just and reasonable, as in all Probability they generally will be, or if it should happen to be otherwise, a modest and humble Representation of the true State of the Facts which they may perhaps not rightly understand, submitted to themselves, and not an insolent Appeal to the Public against them. From a Behaviour of such a Kind
he

he will be sure not only of Pardon, but Applause; for an *English* Audience, like the rest of an *English* People, will always as much disdain the Name of Tyrants as of Slaves. But of how different a Kind from this Behaviour does every Sentence of your Address, or imaginary Justification, speak yours to be! You have felt enough of the Effects of it, I think, to bring you to Reason, and may they have that Effect: For the remaining Sentence, the Conclusion of this Piece I shall observe, that as all Flourishes of Eloquence can never give that irresistible Strength and Grace to any Cause, as one plain Truth to the Purpose, told without any other Ornament than its own intrinsic Worth; so nothing can betray a Cause so deeply as a known and open Falshood: 'Tis that I build on as the Foundation of my strongest Arguments against every Part of your Address; but more than all the rest, it must be the Ruin of all you could hope from this concluding

ing Sentence, which I must be so free to tell you is nothing less than an open Falshood in all its Parts, avowedly thrown upon the Town in the Face of more than an hundred Witnesses: You say *a total Exclusion is now insisted upon*; to which the Public answer, that not one of them ever thought of such a thing, much less nam'd or insisted on it. *That the Manager is to resign his Property*: It was never nam'd or thought of. *The Public to be deprived of their Diversions*. So far is this from ever having been intended, that the whole Meaning of the Disturbance, as you call it, was only to procure to the Public those very Diversions in a Manner most Entertaining, and more worthy their frequenting. *And the Players of their Subsistence*. The foregoing Sentence is a sufficient Answer to this, for the making the Play-Houses more worthy the Town's frequenting must add to, not diminish, the Profits of the Players: And all this, as you

F

say,

say, *after every Concession becoming one Gentleman to ask, and another to make, has been submitted to*; but here, Sir, according to the good old Phrase, reckoning without your Host, for the Publick I am afraid will not look on you as the properest Judge in the World, of what Concessions are proper for them to ask.

If therefore, instead of being satisfied with what you have a Mind they should think sufficient Concessions, they should rise to new Demands upon you, as perhaps they will think they may with great Justice to a great many; and you should be obliged to grant them all, as I cannot see, so long as they are just, how you could avoid it; will it not then gall your Remembrance, to think how small a Concession might have saved all this, if made in Time? What are the additional Sixpences in Dispute, to the Losses and Damages you have already brought upon
your

your Head? As to the Town's not being satisfied with a Play alone, had that, and not the Sixpences, been your Motive for persisting in your *Pantomimes*, it had been highly laudable; but you are as sensible as I am, that there is scarce a single Person in any Audience, but would be much better pleased with the meanest Farce than the best *Pantomime* you can shew 'em: You'll say the Farces are but few, and those the Town tired out with the Repetition of; but it may be answered, there are many others common and to be had any where, which it would be but a very little Trouble to revive, and many of which would please, perhaps, as much as those you act so commonly: But a Thing of much more Consequence to the Publick, is to demand, Why have not Authors better Encouragement to write you new Ones? And to carry it a Step farther still, why is it that the Publick has so few tolerable new Plays? If you

would answer to this, that it is not your Fault they have not, and that there are none writ, nor Men of Genius to write them, I could tell you, that you and I, and many more know it to be false: And here, Sir, you must give me Leave to let the Publick into one of those Secrets of Stage-Policy, those solemn and inviolable Arcana of the Theatre, which few beside yourselves, few even of those who have been hurt by them, are acquainted with.

There was a Time, and that not beyond the Reach of many's Memory, when the Managers of the Theatre were themselves Performers, and knew the real Interest of the Stage too well to ruin it by any underhand or privately-interested Views, when a good Play was a Fortune for the Man who had Genius enough to produce it, and when the Managers thought such a Piece the greatest Treasure that could be put into their Hands. The
Memory

Memory of these good Days has encouraged perhaps more than one or two People to employ their Time and Studies in the like Attempts, but alas! how miserably different (I mean if they are good for any thing) is the Fate they meet with! People will here think I am bantering, perhaps, when I seem to lay a heavier Weight of Ill-usage upon the Author of a good Play than a bad one; but when I take this publick Opportunity of telling you I have found out this Mystery of Mischief among your other Secrets, the Publick will know at length the true Reason why the new Plays they are suffered to see, are so few, and those so bad. The Managers of old consider'd when they had a new Piece before them, if it was of Value, how much it would gain them the Favour of the Town, how many full, (and what they prided themselves more in) how many well pleased Audiences it would bring them, and which perhaps, from a
 very

very just Principle of Gratitude, was not the least of their expected Pleasures from it, how happy they should make a Man of Genius who deserv'd it. Instead, of this honest and generous way of Thinking, suppose a modern Manager, as ignorant of, as unconcerned about, the true Interest and Honour of the Theatre, considers, Here I have a Play before me, which is perhaps a good one: If I play it, it may bring twenty Houses, the Profits of every Third of which must be this Author's: Why should I give him six or seven Night's Profit of the Theatre, when, by reviving an old Play, that costs me nothing, and giving my favourite Performer a Part, ^{ere} in which he may make a particular Figure in it, I can perhaps fill as many Houses without this third Day Toll? Down goes the new Play, condemned to everlasting Silence: But that's not all; what if the Manager of another House should, from any private Reasons, take a different Turn
of

of Mind, and have it played, that would be a fatal Stroke indeed, and therefore must be guarded against: Let the Publick then suppose, in this Condition, the ingenious Author of a Work of Merit baffled, he knows not why, in his Hope of seeing his Play brought on the Stage, in his Applications to the Manager; in all which, if it be possible, he must never be suffer'd to see him, delay'd, not denied, and in fine, trifled with, on from Time to Time, till from the Neglect of other Business and necessary Debts which he has contracted, idly imagining he should be able to pay them from the Profits of a Play, condemn'd all the while never to be performed at all; they see him dying in a Prison, and leaving so the worthy friendly Manager in quiet Possession of his Play, for nothing: And now, Sir, let them turn their Eyes from this sad Object; this unhappy Creature ruin'd and murder'd for writing a good Play, to the brighter Fortune

tune of the happy Author of a bad one ; his Piece we may allow, the very Manager himself Wisdom enough, to find to be good for nothing, as who indeed could fail of seeing that in most of the late Productions we have been suffer'd to see : Here then the mighty Ruler's Eyes put on a milder Aspect, and his Mind a different Turn ; the Author is too much a Blockhead to be dangerous, and his Piece has exactly that Quantity of Merit, the sordid Interest of his Patron Manager could wish it, *viz.* Novelty. He is sure, he thinks, that a new Play will bring a full House, and as Nobody can judge of it before they see it, he prudently considers that a new bad Play will bring as good a House as a new good one : He has also this saving Certainty on his Side, he knows it will be damn'd, and consequently has no Author's Profit to tremble for : Here then the Manager has done his Business, he has fill'd his House, and may insolently pretend, he has endeavour'd to oblige the

Town.

Town. The Author, from seeing his Play prefer'd to others, becomes the Manager's assur'd Associate ; and as People of his Turn are often necessary at a Theatre, he becomes his Bosom Friend and Table Companion, and at worst, if he has ventur'd to ruin his Affairs on the Strength of the Profits of his Play, he has, provided he will do as well as he can, all the dirty Work allotted him, instead of a Prison, his Patron's safe Asylum for his Refuge.

Here then lies perhaps the Difference between the Set of Managers of old, and those of later Days, the one *made*, the other *ruined*, the Fortunes of the Men who spent their Time and Studies in their Service ; the one studied the Diversion of the Public, the other the private Interest of their own Purfes ; and consequently the one gave the Town all the good Plays that came before them, the other all the bad ones ; and whether or not there appears something

G

like

like this in your own Conduct, I would fain ask you, Sir ; if not, pray oblige the Public with the Reasons of your presenting them with that glorious Piece, *Love the Cause and Cure of Grief*, when you had before you more Plays than one, whose Success, if you are actuated by the aforementioned Principles, you had Cause to fear.

Whether this Sort of Conduct, if it be that of the present Age, be better or worse than that of the late Player Managers, let Proof and Experience speak: They at the same Time entertained the Public, and enrich'd themselves; they were look'd upon as Friends and Fathers to their People, their Office was as the Bank, they paid their Servants and whoever else had Dealings with them, punctually and honourably, and afforded many memorable Acts of Genorosity beside : As to their Audiences, they gave their good Wishes with
their

their Money, and after three or four Hours of uninterrupted Attention, gave them at taking Leave a Thunder of Applause and Thanks. Whether all this be exactly the Case at present, I shall only observe, that you are a properer Judge than we.

Upon the whole, however, a Life like theirs was surely more to be wish'd than one of continual Jarrings, Noise, and Up-roar: Who can be sure where the Spirit and Commanding Temper of an Audience will end? If they think it the indispensable Duty of a Manager to treat them in the best Manner he is able, and will resolve to be so treated, how are we sure but that if an Author's new Play, which he has Reason to believe a good one, be delay'd, he knows not why, he may not, by an Advertisement, inform the Public such a one is in the Manager's Hands, and they command its Appearance.

Nay, how can we be sure, that when they see the Name of some unmeaning Actor in the Bills, for a Part they have been us'd to admire another in, which other they also know is innocently distress'd, and all the while entreating to be employed, they may not demand his playing it, and, one by one, command the Manager into receiving all those he has at present reduc'd to such Distress; and to give you my Thoughts on that Subject, I look on it as a Matter worthy the Spirit of an *English* Audience, worthy the Care and Concern of a generous and compassionate People, to examine why a Number of Persons, to whom they have been indebted for the Pleasure of many an Evening spent in rational Delight, are thrown off, without any even pretended Crime, to Want and Misery; and the Charges of the Theatre all the while, as the Manager himself assures us, made more than a Fourth greater, than while we had them.

For

As for their personal Character, if that were any thing to the Purpose, as I am not enough acquainted with them to form a perfect Judgment, I shall only observe, that I believe the World speaks well of many of them, better of all than of him who is their Accuser. I'll venture to be very free with you, Sir, in so honest a Cause as this, and ask you, if what I have heard be true, and you have discarded them for one great Reason, for their speaking ill of you to the World, have they not had too worthy and too great Occasion for it? And let me add another Question to this ; Who is there, Sir, among all those you have kept, that has not done the same? If you are (which I think the World must smile to hear you talk of) so particularly nice in their moral Character, why have you taken into your so select Company that miserable Creature, with nothing to recommend him but his Infidelity

delity and Triumph over all the Oaths his Friends could invent to bind him; who enter'd into an honest Association, with no Designs but to betray it, as sensible he had no Grain of Merit, but what must arise from the Want of a Man worth a Million of him, and whom he therefore prudently determin'd to ruin, as far as in him lay, with a Number of innocent Persons beside, to make Way for his own Nothingness and Insignificancy to become of Consequence. But to wave all this as foreign to the Business of an Audience, suppose they should, however, go so far as not to suffer this Tool, this Puppet, any longer to supply the other's Place, this *no more like the other, than thou to Hercules*. Suppose they should proceed to ask you, when they are tortur'd with your *Alcbymist* again, Why are we to see this Murder of a Subtle, and a Face, when there are Persons distress'd for Want of Employment, whom *Johnson's* self, cou'd
 he

he look out of his Grave, would roar out Applause and Honour to in those Characters. What, I say, Sir, could be your Answer, or how could you deny on their Demand, if urg'd, as they have some others lately, to receive them?

The Publick, and yourself, are so sensible that parallel Cases may be produced in many other Plays, of your miserable Want of the rest, that I shall not be so tedious to repeat them; but appeal only to every Body's Judgment, who has frequented your Theatre this Season, for the real Want of them all, and miserable Shifts you are compelled to, to supply their Places.

I would rather ask you, what is the Injury that any one of these unhappy People have done you, or any other Person, that they should be thus thrown into Distress, and devoted to sure Destruction;
not

not only discarded, but pursued with Hatred and inveterate Malice; not only denied their Bread, where almost all their Lives they had been used to get it, but pursued with Rage and Malice if they dare attempt to get it any where else? How far you are concerned in this, Heaven, and yourself best know; but the World will judge. And what can you expect they'll think, when they see, that when one of them, in mere Necessity to maintain himself and Family, had, after innumerable Difficulties, opened a little Refuge for the rest as well as himself, where they could only expect to get Bread, not Riches; as soon as ever they began to be received amongst his Assistants, Ruin is determined against himself and all of 'em, and Silence, or Infamy and Prison, made their only Alternative. Suppose they should hear to this, that when there was a Scheme on Foot for opening another little Theatre in an ob-

obscure Part of the Town, where it could be of no Hurt to you, the Master of it received Notice, that he must employ none of these unhappy Persons, or expect the Fate the other had just met with: Can you wonder, I say, Sir, if Persons in their Distress, whom every Body knows, and every Body has been pleased by, should find some Friends raised but by common Gratitude and Compassion, to plead their Causes, and urge their Readmission. And should this happen, Sir, I am far from thinking it would be a Misfortune to you. How you have managed in Matter of Price since the Discarding them, as yourself alone, perhaps, know, yourself alone must be allowed to be a Judge of. But when we have your own Assurance, that you are now at more Expence than you were before, 'tis easy for every Body to see, that it can be no Hardship upon you, if you could be even compelled into the taking them in again,

H

and

and putting yourself at the Head of a better Company, at a smaller Expence ; or, provided it even could be at a greater, I am of Opinion, Extravagancies, if they may be called so, that tend to the bettering the Stock one trades with, and bringing more Customers, are far from being of bad Consequences. A better Run of Business than you could otherwise expect, would easily make amends for a something larger Expence ; and I, and every one beside, except yourself, I believe, will judge, that there would be both more Honour, and more Profit, in playing the whole Season to full Houses, (as that I think the Addition of these to the present Strength of your Company would assure to you) though at a larger Expence, than in seeing two Nights in the Week, perhaps, crowded, while the rest are almost empty, though at an easier Charge.

That

That an insolent and tyrannical Way of using Actors, generally terminated in the Ruin of the Manager who gave into it, I thought all, who knew the History of the *English* Stage, had been perfectly acquainted with : You must remember, Sir, there have been Instances before now of two Patentees uniting their Power to bring the Players to what Terms of Slavery they pleased, but that all such Attempts have ended, not in the Actors, but the Master's Ruin. It was, therefore, hoped that when an Agreement was heard of between you and the Manager of the other Play-House, both the Actors and the Town would fare the better for it, not that the one should be worse entertain'd than ever, and the others left to Misery and Ruin by it. Two Playhouses, it is unquestionable, may be supported, and both in Affluence in *London*, at this Time ; and if their Managers understood their mutual

In-

Interest, and could in their Hearts agree, the Town might be equally entertain'd at both, and both be equally fill'd: Were they ty'd down, for Instance, to an Agreement such as was made between the Managers of wiser Times, that no Play acted at one House, should ever be attempted at the other, and all the capital Plays in the *English* Language, equally divided between them. The Town would then be freed from the vexatious Sight of a good Actor seen, as is too commonly the Case at present, in an ill Light, and labouring against Nature, in a Character he never can expect to shine in, from the Vanity and Impatience in his own Nature, that would not suffer him to be at rest, and see another excel in any thing, tho' ever so foreign to what Nature had design'd him for.

And

And now, Sir, tho' I have expressed myself with all this Freedom to you, do me the Justice to believe, that however much Enmity I may have to your Faults, I am far from having any to your Person, much less to the Theatre under your Direction: If what I have said may be of so much Good to you, as to give you Caution to avoid Errors you are going into, or extricate you from the Effects of such as you have already run into, I have my sincere and utmost Wish, and so far give me Leave to subscribe myself,

Your Friend and Well-Wisher.



12-11-1941

[illegible]

100

• • • • •

(continued)

1997-1998

Page 157

